

Advice Note for Local Authorities Landscape and Development Planning



The Association for the Protection of Rural Scotland

Introduction

This Advice Note has been produced as a general response to requests from local planning authorities for APRS to contribute to the development planning process. It is intended to help local planning authorities to protect and enhance the landscapes of their areas when preparing Main Issues Reports, Strategic Development Plans and Local Development Plans under the Planning etc (Scotland) Act 2006.

It first sets out why landscape matters, then proposes seven key actions which local authorities should undertake in order to demonstrate exemplary landscape protection and enhancement in development planning:

1. Landscape Policies
2. National Scenic Areas
3. Local Landscape Areas
4. Wild Land
5. Village Design Statements
6. Renewable Energy
7. Green Belts



Beech Trees by the River Tay

The Association for the Protection of Rural Scotland (APRS)

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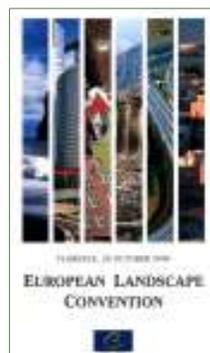
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Why Landscape Matters

Action: Sign Scotland's Landscape Charter

Landscape matters to many people in Scotland. It is based on the appreciation of fine scenery, but covers much more than that. The term 'landscape' applies to all aspects of the relationship between people and place; it defines our experience of land, water, vegetation and culture. Landscape is about what we value in our surroundings, including both our personal memories and our shared experiences. The Council of Europe's *European Landscape Convention* (ELC) provides the accepted international definition of 'landscape': 'an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors'. Full details at www.coe.int



Scotland's heritage of natural and cultural landscapes is renowned throughout the world. Our landscapes enhance our quality of life and our well-being; they give us inspiration, refreshment and enjoyment. They contain the record of the achievements and failures of those people who went before us, and form a key part of our national, regional and local identity. They are one of the main reasons why people visit Scotland, so they form the essential basis of our tourism industry. That is why landscape matters.

The Scottish Landscape Forum has prepared *Scotland's Landscape Charter* to set out the best way to implement the ELC in Scotland. Local authorities will be able to demonstrate their commitment to landscape conservation by signing the Charter when it is launched in October 2010. Full details at www.snh.gov.uk

1. Landscape Policies

Action: Establish landscape policies which apply across the entire area covered by a development plan or development brief

The key tools for managing landscape change are landscape character assessment and historic land-use assessment. The ELC highlights the need for active public

participation in applying these tools to help formulate 'landscape quality objectives', by developing greater understanding of the importance which people attribute to particular landscapes. These should for example distinguish between areas where positive change is required to improve degraded landscapes and areas where existing landscapes of national, regional or local significance are worthy of protection. Landscape quality objectives and policies should then be carried through to development management and other land use planning decisions.

Further information on landscape character assessment is available from Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) and on historic land-use assessment from the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland.

2. National Scenic Areas (NSAs)

Actions: Indicate NSA boundaries; specify policies and controls which apply to NSAs; produce Management Strategy for each NSA

National Scenic Areas (NSAs) are Scotland's only national landscape designation. They are those areas of land considered of national significance on the basis of their outstanding scenic interest, which must be conserved as part of the country's heritage. They have been selected for their characteristic features of scenery, comprising a mixture of richly diverse landscapes including mountains, coastline, sea and freshwater lochs, rivers, woodlands and moorlands. Planning authorities are obliged to consult SNH on certain proposals within NSAs, and permitted development rights have been removed from some forms of development.



*Eildon Hills National Scenic Area from Scott's View
(photo by Laurie Campbell)*

In those local authority areas which include NSAs, development plans should clearly identify the extent of any NSAs, should specify any additional planning controls which apply within them, and should include policies for their protection and enhancement. Local Development Plans should clearly map the precise boundaries of each NSA. Local authorities should produce, implement and review a Management Strategy for each NSA in their area, involving both national communities of interest and local communities of place in its preparation and implementation. The SNH website includes maps and descriptions of each NSA.

3. Local Landscape Areas (LLAs)

Actions: Review existing local landscape designations; indicate LLA boundaries; specify policies which apply to them

All local authority areas contain landscapes which are valued locally. Designating these as LLAs can play an important role in promoting awareness, pride and care of our most valued local landscapes. The purpose of designating LLAs in development plans is to:

- *safeguard and enhance the character and quality of landscapes which are important or particularly valued locally or regionally, or*
- *promote understanding and awareness of the distinctive character and special qualities of local landscapes, or*
- *safeguard and promote important local settings for outdoor recreation and tourism.*



In a proposed LLA near Boarhills, Fife

LLAs should be clearly identified and protected through development plans, which should clearly set out the reasons for designating them and any management recommendations which arise. Most areas already have locally designated landscapes; these are mostly called Areas of Great Landscape Value, but Regional Scenic Area and other titles are also used. These have been prepared over a long time, using varying and in some cases unclear criteria. All local authorities should therefore review all existing local landscape designations and replace them with LLAs, prepared according to consistent and defensible criteria.

SNH has published guidance on local landscape designations.

4. Wild Land

Actions: Indicate extent of core wild land and specify policies which apply to it

Some of Scotland's remoter mountain and coastal areas possess an elemental quality from which many people derive psychological and spiritual benefits. Such areas are very sensitive to any form of development or intrusive human activity, and great care should be taken to safeguard their wild land character. Wild land in Scotland is

relatively remote and inaccessible, not noticeably affected by contemporary human activity, and offers high-quality opportunities to escape from the pressures of everyday living and to find physical and spiritual refreshment. Scotland's wild land is valued by its own people and by visitors from elsewhere, both as a distinctive part of Scotland's heritage and identity and for the opportunities it provides for outdoor recreational experiences. Wild land is valued both by those who visit it and by many who have never experienced it first hand but still value its existence.



Lairig Ghru, Cairngorms

Local authorities which cover substantial areas of core wild land should clearly indicate its extent on development plan maps and should include policies for its protection and enhancement.

Further guidance on the importance of wild land and ways in which it can be protected and enhanced can be found in the SNH policy statement *Wildness in Scotland's Countryside*. This includes a search area map which is likely to encompass all the main areas of core wild land.

5. Village Design Statements

Action: Encourage retention of village character, integrity and setting through preparing village design statements

The experience of APRS from preparing a pilot study of Tarland, Aberdeenshire in 2002, demonstrated that participating in a village design statement (VDS) encourages people to play an active role in the future of their communities. The APRS-initiated plan for Tarland has been recognised as an innovative approach to village planning and has been adopted by Aberdeenshire Council as a favoured approach to preparing other such plans.



Tarland, Aberdeenshire

A good village design statement addresses the landscape setting as well as the design of the buildings and spaces within the village itself. Early engagement in village design statements can help to achieve better outcomes in decision-making. Involvement in the process can help local people to consolidate views on the future sustainable development of the community within its landscape setting.

Village design statements are an effective means of ensuring partnership between the community and the planning profession in the development plan process. The Projects page of the APRS website has a link to the Tarland VDS, and two further Scottish VDS examples are those for Pencaitland in East Lothian and for Glencaple in Dumfries and Galloway.

6. Renewable Energy

Action: Set out a clear spatial strategy for renewable energy developments

At present the greatest threat to many of Scotland's landscapes comes from the excessive scale of poorly-located renewable energy developments, particularly large onshore wind farms with their associated access roads and grid connections. In accordance with Scottish Planning Policy, development plans should therefore set out both a spatial strategy and criteria-based policies for the strategic management of renewable energy developments, including clearly identifying preferred, possible and unsuitable areas for large-scale wind farms. Unsuitable areas should include National Parks, National Scenic Areas and Local Landscape Areas together with adequate buffer zones to protect their settings.



National policy on renewable energy is set out in paragraphs 182-195 of the Scottish Planning Policy on the Scottish Government's website www.scotland.gov.uk

7. Green Belts

Actions: Show Green Belt boundaries and include policies for their protection

The purposes of Green Belts are to prevent coalescence of towns and cities by directing growth to the best locations, to protect their landscape setting and to provide access to open space for quiet recreation. There are currently Green Belts in Aberdeen & Aberdeenshire, Argyll & Bute (Helensburgh, Cardross), Ayr and Prestwick, Clackmannanshire, Edinburgh & Midlothian, Falkirk and Grangemouth, Glasgow & the Clyde Valley, and Stirling. A further three green belts, for Dunfermline, Perth and St Andrews, are now approved in principle in Structure Plans.



Looking over the fields towards Helensburgh

Development plans for areas containing Green Belts should clearly show their boundaries, and should include policies which strictly limit development to that essential for land management and recreation and which promote the enhancement and restoration of degraded areas. National policy on Green Belts is set out in paragraphs 159-164 of the Scottish Planning Policy.

Further Information

Much useful general information and advice is contained in the *European Landscape Convention* and in the landscape section of the SNH website www.snh.gov.uk

For further information please contact:

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APRS

Scotland's Countryside Champion

APRS is the charity which promotes the care of **all** of Scotland's rural landscapes.

We aim to

- protect and enhance Scotland's rural landscapes for future generations
- promote effective planning and landscape protection systems in Scotland
- encourage genuinely sustainable development in rural Scotland
- raise awareness of the importance of Scotland's landscapes to its people and economy
- support the activity of land managers who care for Scotland's landscapes

We do this by

- working in partnership with individuals, other charities, local authority, government and public bodies
- active involvement in national policy development and advocacy
- advising members of the public on how to respond to proposals which affect their local landscapes
- publicising our work to our members and beyond through our website, quarterly newsletter *Rural Scotland* and regular email bulletins

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